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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, March 23, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "FOOD NEWS." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the Bureau of Plant Industry, United States Department of Agriculture.

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More food news on schedule today -- news about canned grapefruit, spring lambs, and this year's crop of cantaloups.

The Bureau of Agricultural Economics reports that British buyers favor our canned grapefruit -- United States' canned grapefruit. They say that the grapefruit segments canned in this country and also the canned juice are becoming more and more popular in the United Kingdom. In fact, the United Kingdom is the principal outlet for grapefruit and grapefruit juice canned in the United States.

During the 1931-32 season exports to the United Kingdom of canned grapefruit amounted to only a quarter of a million cases. But this past season they had increased to more than a million cases. During the same period, the United States production of canned segments and juice increased from a million to the 10 million cases produced during the past year.

Here's some news about the early lamb crop that may be of interest to listeners who like advance tips on seasonal foods. The agricultural economists say that the early spring lamb crop of 1938 in the principal early lambing States is at least 15 percent larger than the small early crop of '37. The condition of the lambs about the first of March was exceptionally good in all areas, much above the condition a year earlier and above the average for March first. Up to the first of the month, weather and feed conditions had been favorable in nearly all of the early lambing States -- a sharp contrast to the situation during the early months of '37 in some of these States.

In California, the most important early lamb State, the winter has been mild and feed conditions unusually good. Similar conditions have prevailed in the other Pacific States and in Idaho. In the southeastern States, where the winter has been mild and feed supplies abundant, many more lambs were born by March first this year than by that date last year. Texas also has had feed and weather conditions favorable for the development of early lambs and the fattening of yearling lambs.

So the predictions are that marketing of early lambs before July first this year will be much larger than before that date last year, and that the average quality of the lambs will be much better. But marketings of grass-fat yearling lambs from Texas before July first will be considerably smaller than the record marketings of last year.



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Here's a little cantaloup news. If you go to the market to buy a melon you want one that is firm and has the fine flavor that comes from ripening on the vine. This year the farmer and the scientist plan to fill the order. When the cantaloup crop starts moving about the first of May, more than 90 percent of the crop from the Imperial Valley of California and the Salt River Valley of Arizona--areas that normally produce more than half the commercial crop -- will be Cantaloup No. 45. Cantaloup No. 45 is the new mildew resistant cantaloup, a product of 10 years' breeding work by scientists of the Department of Agriculture and the California Experiment Station working together.

Between 25 thousand and 30 thousand acres are planted to the No. 45, although as short a time ago as 1935, this cantaloup was planted only on a quarter-acre experimental plot. A fall crop was grown that year just for seed. In 1936 growers in the Imperial Valley planted 10 thousand acres to No. 45. And last year they planted 20 thousand acres, or close to 90 percent of the crop. Last year Arizona growers also started the new variety. The two areas shipped more than 10 thousand cars of No. 45 in 1937.

Department scientists, keeping a close check on the new variety as it arrived in New York, found that eastern consumers on the average, received the best-quality cantaloups ever shipped from the irrigated regions. These melons had the flavor that only comes from ripening on the vine. Formerly the markets had sold other varieties that had to be pulled at the half-ripe stage in order to endure the long train trip.

Most of the cantaloups were precooled before starting the 9-day trans-continental trip so there was little loss among the vine-ripened fruit. Most of the melons were in good condition even 4 or 5 days after arrival. This good keeping quality is one of the best characteristics of the new variety.

But the quality of this variety which has caused its immediate popularity is its resistance to powdery mildew -- the cantaloup disease that almost destroyed the cantaloup industry in the Imperial Valley and prompted the 10-year breeding program that produced the new variety.

You may be interested to know the history of No. 45. Federal and State scientists took a melon variety from India which was no good for eating but was resistant to mildew and crossed it with Hale Best, a desirable American variety, that had flavor and other fine qualities but could not resist mildew. Back-crossing on Hale Best and several generations of selection finally produced Cantaloup No. 50 which proved itself excellent for shipping quality. Four more generations of selective breeding produced No. 45, which you will be seeing at your market this year when cantaloup season opens.

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